



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

March 5, 2010

WOLF FUNDING

SENATE FISH AND GAME

EXHIBIT NO. 3

DATE 3/17/11

BILL NO. SB 390

The following information was obtained from the USFWS and is based on information from the DRAFT USFWS Interagency Annual Report for 2009: Wolf recovery has been almost entirely funded by federal appropriations and some private donations. Wolf recovery and management in the northern Rocky Mountains (Idaho, Wyoming, Montana) from 1974 (when wolves first became listed) through federal fiscal year 2009 has cost approximately \$35,724,000.

A condition of Montana assuming wolf management responsibilities from USFWS in 2004 was that federal funds would be provided under the contractual terms of a Cooperative Agreement signed by FWP and USFWS. Since then, all of FWP's core wolf program has been funded through federal sources. Since FY2000, FWP has spent \$2,381,806 in federal dollars. An additional \$44,770 of state dollars have been spent by FWP since FY2000. The annual amount of federal dollars spent by FWP for wolf management in the past 5 years is as follows:

- FY 2006 - \$401,464
- FY 2007 - \$473,546
- FY 2008 - \$485,968
- FY 2009 - \$609,261
- FY 2010 - \$721,177 (includes carry-over from previous year)
- FY 2011 - \$626,000 (in USFWS FFY10 budget)

Most of this funding has been spent for recovery coordination and on-the-ground implementation of Montana's wolf program including population monitoring, collaring, data management, depredation response, research, outreach, and reporting.

Other FWP staff make significant contributions to the program above and beyond the work done by staff whose primary responsibilities are wolf-related. Examples include administration, incidental biologist / field technician activities, law enforcement, public outreach, and legal support. Exact figures have not been quantified.

Beginning with FY2008, the FWP and USDA Wildlife Services agreed that \$110,000/year that FWP had provided Wildlife Services for predator control for wildlife management purposes would instead be used for wolf management and control (thus enabling Wildlife Services to utilize \$110,000 of federal money that they had been spending on wolves to be used for coyote control elsewhere). Total FWP license funding provided to Wildlife Services for wolf management from FY2008 forward is \$110,000/year.

Wildlife Services is funded through the regular Congressional budgeting process as a federal agency in addition to special Congressional directives, particularly with respect to wolf-related work. WS also receives money from other sources in Montana for other agency activities, including the state per capita fee and county livestock assessments. Wildlife Services the appropriate agency to speak to agency funding sources, amount of special Congressional directives routed to Montana, and actual expenditures. Information from Wildlife Services regarding expenditures (as described in the Annual Wolf Report) through 2008 indicates the following:

In FFY 2007, WS spent an estimated \$183,924 responding to wolf complaints and assisting MFWP with depredation management responses such as radio collaring or killing problem wolves. This is an increase above the estimated \$152,000 spent in federal fiscal year 2006. In FFY 2008, Montana WS expended approximately \$227,437. This is an increase of about \$43,500 over the previous year. The increase is due in part to increases in fixed costs (e.g. fuel or personnel) and working in new areas. Administrative time is not reflected in the total.

Montana Wolf Conservation and Management Plan



- Preparing to Manage Wolves in Montana
 - FWP's Role
 - Montana Wolf Numbers
 - Funding Wolf Management
 - The Prey: Deer, Elk & Moose
 - Wolves and Livestock
- Compensation for Livestock Injuries and Losses
 - Public Safety

Preparing to Manage Wolves in Montana

Q. What is the wolf conservation and management effort all about and why are Montana, Idaho and Wyoming involved?

A. Among the federal requirements for removing the gray wolf from the endangered species list, Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming must have management plans and other regulatory mechanisms in place to maintain the recovered population within the Northern Rocky Mountain Recovery Area.

Q. Are the states fulfilling their federal requirements?

A. No. Montana and Idaho each have federally-approved plans. Montana's effort was characterized as a "class act" by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Federal officials say that delisting in the northern Rockies is held up due to the lack of an approved plan and compatible state laws in Wyoming. Once that situation is resolved, federal authorities say they will take the necessary steps to officially delist the gray wolf. Once delisted, the states of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming will each be legally required to sustain its share of a viable wolf population in the northern Rockies.

Q. What issues have emerged in Montana?

A. Through the work of the Montana Wolf Management Advisory Council-and subsequent community work sessions throughout Montana in 2002-03-Montanans identified issues related to: wolf management, numbers and distribution; social factors; administration and delisting; prey populations (deer, elk and moose); funding; livestock; wolf habitat; compensation for livestock losses; economics; information and education; human safety; wolf monitoring, and others.

Q. What does the recommended Montana's wolf conservation and management plan seek to establish?

A. The recommended plan, which is an updated version of the Montana Wolf Management Advisory Council recommendations, would create a wolf conservation and management program similar to that for black bears and mountain lions. It would be based on numbers, distribution and public acceptance. Wolf management techniques, and the methods used to resolve conflicts, would be based on a benchmark of 15 breeding pairs in Montana. The plan considers the spectrum of management activities-from simple harassment techniques to chase wolves away, to lethal control measures, like offering kill permits to landowners and regulated hunting or trapping. The aim is to sustain the wolf population, Montana's deer and elk populations, and to help resolve wolf-human and wolf-livestock conflicts.

Q. Why did FWP choose to recommend the Updated Council Alternative as the final plan?

A. To best balance the diversity of public interests and desires about wolf conservation and management. The recommended plan is based on the consensus recommendations of the Montana Wolf Advisory Council, a broad array of public comments gathered throughout this EIS process, and advice from wolf experts. It seeks a balance between the biological needs of wolves and the concerns of people.

TOP

FWP's Role

Q. Will FWP now begin to manage wolves?

A. No. Even after the Record of Decision is signed by FWP Director Jeff Hagener in September, a state plan is just one step FWP and Montana must take in what is expected to be a longer federal process that includes an evaluation of each state's plan and regulations that must together maintain a secure wolf population.

Q. Is FWP going to manage wolves?

A. That is the agency's hope. But FWP won't obtain management authority until wolves are officially delisted. In addition, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service must approve Montana's, Idaho's, and Wyoming's management plans. FWP, however, firmly believes a state-administered conservation and management program can best address the diverse expectations of Montana's citizens.

Q. What are the legal aspects of state-run wolf management?

A. Upon delisting, the gray wolf will be reclassified under state law from "endangered" to a species "in need of management" which establishes the legal mechanism to prevent intentional human-caused mortality outside the immediate defense of life/property. When it becomes clear that the management program is maintaining a secure, viable population, reclassification to big game or furbearer may follow.

Q. Would any other state agency have any legal obligations regarding wolf management?

A. Yes. Montana law assigns joint responsibility to FWP and the Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) to manage wildlife that can cause damage to livestock. FWP and MDOL will work together with federal Wildlife Services (formerly Animal Damage Control) to resolve wolf-livestock conflicts.

TOP

Montana Wolf Numbers

Q. How many wolves are there in the Northern Rocky Mountain Recovery Area?

A. An estimated 835 wolves, in about 110 packs with 66 of those qualifying as breeding pairs, inhabited the northern Rockies recovery area at the end of 2004.

Q. How many wolves are in Montana?

A. Federal officials estimated that 153 wolves, in 40 packs, and about 15 breeding pairs inhabited Montana. These estimates were made in December 2004. Additional wolf packs-and dispersing wolves-may exist but have yet to be confirmed.

TOP

Funding Wolf Management

Q. What will it cost to manage wolves in Montana?

A. FWP's best estimate for the preferred alternative suggests that it will cost from \$913,000 to \$954,000 annually. Cooperating federal agencies are expected to incur some expenses through the federal budgetary process.

Q. Can FWP fund wolf management in Montana?

A. Not at this time. It is clear existing financial resources are not adequate to manage wolves in Montana. Additional funding will be required to implement all elements of a wolf management program.

Q. How will state wolf management be funded?

A. The recommended plan directs FWP to seek additional funding from special state or federal appropriations, private foundations, or other private sources to supplement funds committed by FWP in amounts similar to those for other native carnivores like black bears and mountain lions. The governors of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming are pursuing a program called the Northern Rocky Mountain Grizzly Bear and Gray Wolf National Management Trust to help the states fund the management of recovered threatened and endangered species. The idea originated in Wyoming. In light of local funding and resource shortfalls, the states hope Congress will recognize the significant national interest in the conservation and management of these species. In the interim, the three states may seek special Congressional appropriations to fund state activities during the transition of management authority.

TOP

The Prey: Deer, Elk & Moose

Q. Will wolves impact game populations like deer, elk and moose?

A. Yes. How much of an impact is uncertain at this time. Wolves-like mountain lions, coyotes, and bears-eat deer, elk, moose and other game animals. All wildlife populations are variable through time and across a diversity of habitats. Population numbers fluctuate. It won't be the same everywhere all the time. Research in Montana and elsewhere has shown that predation may influence deer, elk and moose populations through changes in the survival of young, the death of adult animals, or a combination of both. For example, if a higher than normal number of female deer die in

any given year from things such as hunting or a severe winter, local conditions could allow wolves and other predators to keep that deer herd's numbers suppressed or slow its population growth.

Q. Will wolves affect hunting in Montana?

A. They probably will in some places. As with other population effects, however, there is no clear answer except that wolves will add another factor to consider among all the environmental and social factors wildlife biologists wrestle with every year in setting harvest limits on big game. Hunting opportunities are then adjusted in response to all factors combined. Wolves may affect some local, deer, elk or moose populations. When predation is combined with unfavorable environmental conditions-like drought or a severe winter-it may affect hunter opportunities in that area.

Q. How will FWP assess whether wolves are adversely affecting a big game population and how will it respond?

A. Monitoring programs will help FWP detect changes in both wolf and prey populations. While a direct cause/effect relationship between wolf predation and prey-population decline is difficult to pinpoint with certainty, in light of other environmental factors, FWP would consider reducing the size of the wolf population in a localized area. Wolf management decisions would also be paired with other management actions to reduce prey mortality - like adjusting hunter opportunity or more aggressive management of other predator species such as mountain lions. Parallel management efforts for predators and prey would continue until the deer, elk, or moose population rebounded and environmental conditions are favorable.

TOP

Wolves and Livestock

Q. What will livestock producers be able to do to protect their livestock under state management authority?

A. Under the recommended plan, management tools are intended to decrease livestock depredations. Livestock producers would be offered assistance to reduce depredation risks, and they would be allowed to harass wolves, or to kill wolves caught attacking, killing or threatening their stock. In addition, to remove a wolf causing chronic conflicts, a livestock producer could receive a special kill permit. All such incidents must be reported to FWP and an investigation would follow. This is consistent with current state laws that address protection of human life and private property when they are in imminent danger from wildlife.

Q. What impacts will wolves have on livestock or stockgrowers?

A. From 1995-2004, authorities confirmed 167 cattle, 397 sheep, 25 dogs and nine llamas were lost to wolf depredation in Montana. Some stockgrowers, however, have experienced other "unconfirmed" losses they suspect were due to wolves. So far, most depredation incidents investigated by Wildlife Services within Montana occurred on private land. Although wolves cause a small number of the total livestock losses in Montana compared to other sources of livestock mortality-like weather, disease, and reproductive problems-personal financial losses may result directly from wolf depredation. Indirect costs may accumulate because of increased management activities, changes in husbandry practices, injured livestock, or uncompensated losses. These financial hardships accrue to individual farmers and ranchers and may be significant to them.

TOP

Compensation for Livestock Injuries and Losses

Q. Will farmers and ranchers get compensated if wolves injure or kill livestock when wolves are managed by Montana?

A. The recommended plan directs the State of Montana to develop, in cooperation with livestock producers and private groups, an entity to administer and fund a compensation program for damages caused by wolves. Compensation is critical to maintaining tolerance for wolves by livestock producers who experience financial losses due to wolves.

Q. How will this program be funded?

A. That will be determined by the work accomplished by the State of Montana, livestock producers and private groups who will seek to create an entity to administer and fund a compensation program for damages caused by wolves.

Q. Doesn't the Defenders of Wildlife already have a program to compensate farmers and ranchers when wolves injure or kill livestock?

A. Yes, but Defenders of Wildlife may end the program when wolves are delisted. Livestock producers have been compensated for confirmed losses at fair market value and 50% of market value for probable losses at the time of death and at fall value for young of the year. Between 1987 and 2001, Defenders of Wildlife paid more than \$81,000 for all confirmed and probable wolf-caused losses in Montana.

TOP

Public Safety

Q. Should Montanans be concerned about public safety?

A. Wolves generally fear people and rarely pose a threat to human safety. In the past 100 years, there have been several published accounts of human injuries, but no fatalities, due to wolves. It is, however, unusual for a wild wolf to associate or interact with people, linger near buildings, livestock, or domestic dogs. This behavior is more typical of a released captive wolf, a wolf habituated to a domestic food source or wolf-dog hybrid. Wild wolves generally have some place to be and something to do and do not seek out or loiter around areas of human settlement.

Q. What should Montanans do if they see a wolf?

A. You can report wolf sightings to your local FWP office or to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 406-449-5225.

Despite their wariness of people, wolves will still use natural habitats in close proximity to humans, particularly in forested and other settings that have come to be called "urban-wildland interface." For this reason, we are more likely to see gray wolves than other large carnivores such as mountain lions or black bears. Wolves will commonly use roads, utility corridors, and railroad rights-of-way as travel routes. Tracks and scats are often found on roads. Wolves also feed and rest in open areas with good visibility, whereas lions tend to hide their kills and feed or rest in dense vegetation. Wolves will also travel across openings in forest cover or natural meadows in ways that mountain lions or bears do not. And because wolves live in packs, more than one may be seen at a time.

TOP

WHITE PAPER ON PREDATION CONTINUED FEB 2006

MT WS receives \$110,000/year from the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Department (MFWP) for wolf damage management activities. This is from hunting license revenue.

CA WS receives \$20,000/year for Public Safety (coyotes, black bears, and mountain lions) from the California Department of Fish and Game. CA WS also receives \$100,000/year from CDFG for feral swine depredation work. (hunting license revenue). CA WS receives additional funding from CDFG to protect Eden Landing snowy plover/least tern/salt marsh harvest mouse (\$21,000.00 per year), Nevada bighorn sheep (\$208,075 per year), and Batiquitos - least tern/snowy plover (\$49,999 per year).

Currently CO-WS receives \$120,000/year from the Colorado Division of Wildlife. It is to assist with bear and lion depredations and other special projects such as urban coyotes. It is license revenue.

North Dakota operates on a 2-year budget cycle and ND WS receives \$768,800 (\$384,400/year) from the ND Game & Fish Department for our furbearer damage management work. These funds are 100% hunting license revenues. In addition, each year ND WS receives \$30,000/year (again, 100% hunting license revenues) to manage goose damage. So, total funding each year to ND WS from NDGFD is \$414,400.

In Nevada there is a \$3 fee on every big game application. Not the tag but on every application. This generates about \$400,000 every year of sportsmen's dollars not general fund. If the money is not spent, it rolls over from year to year. Most of the money comes to WS but some is spent by Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW). The Nevada WS budget for this year on projects voted and approved by the Wildlife Commission is \$471,000. Most of the projects are to protect mule deer, bighorn sheep, sage grouse, and a couple of small pheasant and turkey projects.

AZ WS receives about \$40,000/year for aerial antelope protection, \$7,500/year for black-footed ferret disease monitoring, and on call for human health & safety issues for coyotes and mountain lions from Arizona Game & Fish Department. The AGFD does not receive general funds from the state legislature. License fees do not provide any dedicated funding. It could be from multiple sources including donations, licenses, Sec 6 funds, heritage lottery funds, and tribal casino funds. Funding sources are not specifically identified in agreements.

UT WS receives \$459,000/year for coyote work on deer units (mostly in the form of aerial hunting), \$22,000/year for lion control on bighorn sheep units, and \$30,000/year for raven, red fox, and coyote control on sage grouse leks. The bighorn sheep and sage grouse agreements are federal agreements with WS, but the deer protection agreement is legislative general fund money to Utah Dept. of Ag and Food. It originally came from a \$5 surcharge on license sales, but they thought they would compromise their Pittman-Robertson (PI) grants, so they paid for the predator control out of state general funds and used the increased license revenues for something else. The original amount of our funding was \$500,000/year but it was reduced to \$400,000/year in 2009 because of the economic downturn. There is also a statutory 25% match paid by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) on all head tax that is collected, and this year it came to \$59,000. UT WS had a meeting two weeks ago with the director of Dept. of Natural Resources and the Director of Division of Wildlife Resources (a division within the DNR), and they are providing us an additional \$150,000 for deer protection this year (state FY 2010), then \$200,000 per year in 2011, and again in 2012 from their discretionary funds. They did indicate they had re-examined the legal ramifications of using PI funds for predator control, and they feel they can now legally do it. The UT State Legislature plans to propose an additional license tag increase next year that go to WS for coyote control, but they have not given an indication of how much this tag increase will be.

South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks conducts their own predator and beaver damage management program. They put in \$610,660 of state funds/year (general funds and license revenue) plus an additional \$305,330/year of cooperative funding (livestock tax for predator and beaver damage

management) they receive from the Counties. By state law, SD GFP must match cooperative dollars from livestock producers 2:1 (\$2.00 from the game department for every cooperative \$1.00).

Idaho Fish & Game gives \$50,000/year to the State ADC Board to fund some of ID WS' predator control efforts, another \$50,000/year to ID WS for mule deer protection in Eastern Idaho, another \$50,000/year to fund some wolf control work by ID WS (we plan on using this when we start taking wolves to protect elk) and another \$16,000/year to ID WS for feral pig control in South-Central Idaho. ID WS also got kind of an "on call" arrangement with IDFG where we will do some fixed-wing aerial hunting work at their request (anywhere from \$200 - 6,000/year). I doubt they are using any license fees for that, but I'm not sure.

In WI, WS gets approximately \$1,264,000 from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Wildlife for wolf (\$20,664), double-crested cormorants (\$20,705), beaver (\$146,300), bear (\$164,720), and wildlife damage abatement and claims (\$911,703). The entire Wildlife Damage and Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP) is built around a surcharge on every hunting license sold. The beaver damage management funding comes from a surcharge on state hunting licenses including trout stamp sales and waterfowl stamp sales (wild rice protection). Surcharges on hunting licenses is the primary funding source for the WDACP. A portion of the bear nuisance program funding also comes from hunters dollars as well.

For over a decade, AR-WS has received \$260,000 annually, from Arkansas Game & Fish Commission to handle migratory bird problems. This year AR WS have added feral hog control on one Wildlife Management Area, at the AGFC's request. The funds come from one-eighth of one percent of general revenue state funding.

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) provides OR WS with \$60,000/year of general funds for use to address conflicts with predatory animals as defined by state statute (birds & rodents injurious to agriculture & property, this includes the furbearer beaver when causing damage on private land but not public land, as well as coyote and feral pigs). ODFW also gives OR WS \$50,000/year of sportsmen's tag money to manage game animals and furbearers they are charged with managing, cougars, bears, wolves when they are not federally listed and other furbearers. ODFW also gives OR WS \$35,000/year to administratively remove cougars out of the Steens Game Management Unit (GMU), these are sportsmen's dollars. Finally, ODFW provides OR WS with \$5,000/year for administrative removal of cougars in the Wenaha GMU.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department pays WY WS to conduct trophy game damage management work. WY WS charges WGFD \$35/hour to cover the costs of WY WS responding to complaints and assisting WGFD on an hourly basis (salary, benefits, vehicle etc.) In the same agreement WY WS is available to conduct aerial operations at WGFD's request. The agreement generally amounts to somewhere between \$15,000 and \$30,000 per year. It is funded from hunting license revenues.

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United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service

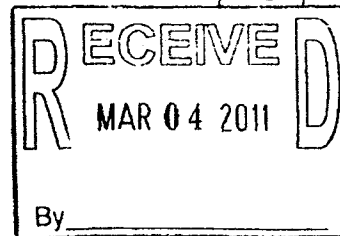


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Montana Sheep and Lamb Loss 2010

Cooperating with the Montana Department of Agriculture
10 W 15th Street, Suite 3100 · Helena, MT 59626
800-835-2612 · 800-915-6277 FAX · www.nass.usda.gov/mt



Montana Sheep and Lamb Loss 2010

Total Loss, Cause of Death and Value of Loss

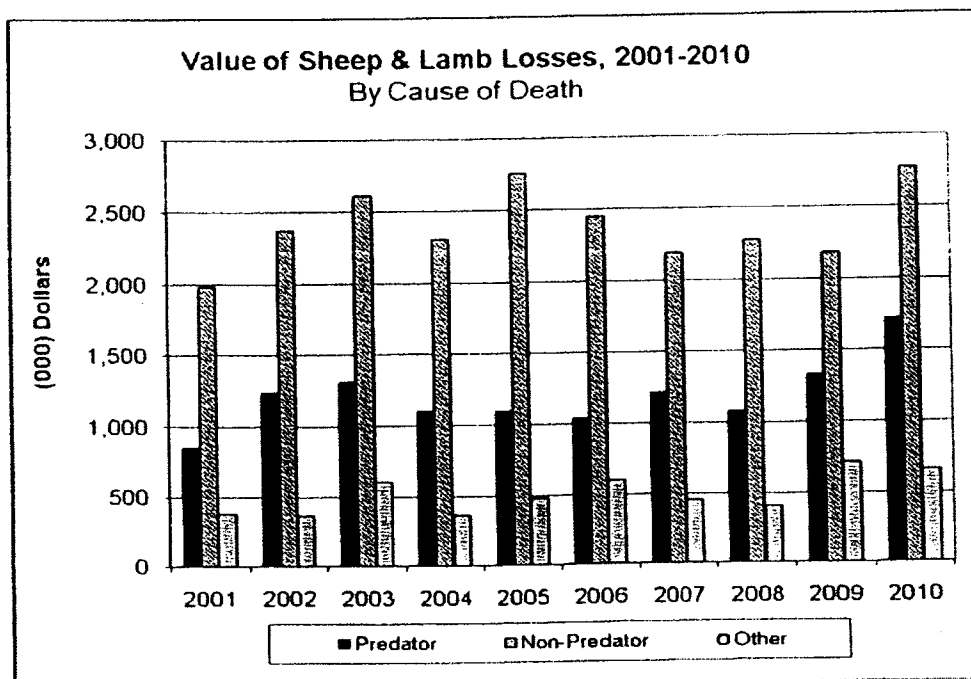
Released: February 18, 2011

Montana sheep and lamb producers lost 49,000 animals to weather, predators, disease and other causes during 2010, representing a total value of \$5.1 million, according to a survey conducted by USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Montana Field Office. The total number of sheep and lambs lost was down 7,000 head from last year, but the total value of inventory lost was 22 percent more than a year ago. The January 1, 2010 inventory was 4 percent less than the previous year. Sheep and lamb deaths amounted to 10.0 percent of the January 1 inventory and lambs born, down 1 percent from last year.

The number of sheep and lambs lost to all predators totaled 17,800 head, down 1,000 head from last year. Lamb losses by all predators amounted to 14,800 head, down 4 percent from last year. The number of sheep lost to all predators totaled 3,000, down 400 head from a year ago. Predators caused an estimated \$1.7 million in losses in 2010, up 29 percent from the previous year. Losses due to predators amounted to 3.6 percent of the January 1 inventory plus lambs born and 36 percent of all sheep and lamb deaths. Coyotes remained the largest predator for both sheep and lambs. Coyotes accounted for 68 percent of the predator caused losses and 25 percent of all death losses in the state. The value of losses attributed to coyotes was \$1.1 million.

The total value of non-predatory losses was \$2.8 million in 2010, compared with \$2.2 million in 2009. Non-predatory losses accounted for 51 percent of all losses. The largest non-predatory cause of losses was weather at 8,700 head. Sheep lost to non-predatory factors totaled 8,100 head, 8 percent lower than 2009. Non-predatory lamb losses came in at 17,100 head, 2,100 head less than a year ago.

Producers reported considerable less sheep and lambs lost to unknown causes this past year. The number of sheep and lambs lost to unknown causes decreased 35 percent from last year. Lambs lost to unknown causes totaled 4,100 head, compared with 6,400 head last year. Unknown causes claimed 1,900 sheep, compared with 2,800 head last year. The value of sheep and lambs lost to unknown causes decreased slightly to \$0.7 million.



Methodology and Definitions

The sheep and lamb survey utilized multi-frame sampling procedures. The survey involved drawing a random sample from a list of livestock producers maintained by the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Montana Field Office. In addition, sheep producers living in a selected sample of area segments were interviewed. This procedure assures complete coverage of sheep producers by accounting for ranchers/farmers who may not be on the list.

Sheep and lamb loss estimates published by the USDA include sheep losses for the entire year, but include only those lamb losses that occur after docking. This special report also includes an estimate of lambs lost before docking.

Cooperation

This study was undertaken at the request of the Montana Wool Growers Association who also provided funding. The USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Montana Field Office conducted the survey and expresses appreciation to all cooperating sheep producers.

Table 1: Sheep & Lambs: Inventory, Death Loss, and Percent of Total Inventory Lost, Montana, 2001-2010

| Year | January 1 Inventory | Lamb Crop | All Sheep Losses | Lamb Losses | | | Total Loss | Percent of Total Inventory Lost 1/ |
|------|---------------------|-----------|------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------|------------|------------------------------------|
| | | | | Before Docking | After Docking | All Lambs | | |
| | | | | (000) Head | | | | |
| 2001 | 360 | 340 | 19 | 24 | 23 | 47 | 66 | 9.1 |
| 2002 | 335 | 295 | 18 | 25 | 24 | 49 | 67 | 10.2 |
| 2003 | 310 | 275 | 17 | 21 | 20 | 41 | 58 | 9.6 |
| 2004 | 300 | 260 | 13 | 17 | 14 | 31 | 44 | 7.6 |
| 2005 | 295 | 255 | 12 | 19 | 15 | 34 | 46 | 8.1 |
| 2006 | 280 | 255 | 14 | 20 | 17 | 37 | 51 | 9.2 |
| 2007 | 275 | 255 | 14 | 18 | 18 | 36 | 50 | 9.1 |
| 2008 | 270 | 235 | 14 | 19 | 17 | 36 | 50 | 9.5 |
| 2009 | 255 | 235 | 15 | 21 | 20 | 41 | 56 | 11.0 |
| 2010 | 245 | 225 | 13 | 18 | 18 | 36 | 49 | 10.0 |

1/ Total inventory equals January 1 inventory, plus lamb crop, plus lambs lost before docking.

Table 2: Sheep & Lambs: Death Losses by Cause and Value of Loss, Montana, 2001-2010

| Year | Predator Losses | | Non-Predator Loss | Unknown Causes | Value of Losses | | | |
|------|-----------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------|---------|
| | Total | Percent of Total Inventory Lost 1/ | | | Predator | Non Predator | Unknown | Total |
| | (000) Head | Percent | | | (000) Dollars | | | |
| 2001 | 19.9 | 2.7 | 38.6 | 7.5 | 850.8 | 1,980.6 | 375.0 | 3,206.4 |
| 2002 | 21.4 | 3.3 | 39.9 | 5.7 | 1,236.0 | 2,378.2 | 366.6 | 3,980.8 |
| 2003 | 17.7 | 2.9 | 33.0 | 7.3 | 1,309.2 | 2,608.0 | 605.7 | 4,522.9 |
| 2004 | 13.7 | 2.4 | 26.0 | 4.3 | 1,102.6 | 2,306.2 | 364.3 | 3,773.1 |
| 2005 | 12.4 | 2.2 | 28.4 | 5.2 | 1,096.4 | 2,755.6 | 477.6 | 4,329.6 |
| 2006 | 14.1 | 2.5 | 29.6 | 7.3 | 1,044.4 | 2,453.7 | 600.3 | 4,098.4 |
| 2007 | 17.0 | 3.1 | 27.5 | 5.5 | 1,214.4 | 2,189.3 | 458.0 | 3,861.7 |
| 2008 | 15.2 | 2.9 | 29.2 | 5.6 | 1,078.3 | 2,272.6 | 412.7 | 3,763.6 |
| 2009 | 18.8 | 3.7 | 28.0 | 9.2 | 1,328.3 | 2,185.7 | 713.1 | 4,227.1 |
| 2010 | 17.8 | 3.6 | 25.2 | 6.0 | 1,717.7 | 2,772.4 | 657.6 | 5,147.7 |

1/ Total inventory equals Jan 1 inventory, plus lamb crop, plus lambs lost before docking.

Table 3: Sheep & Lambs: Death Losses by Cause, Montana 2009-2010

| Cause of Loss | SHEEP LOSS | | | | LAMB LOSS | | | | TOTAL LOSS | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------|
| | Number of Head | | Value in Dollars (000) 1/ | | Number of Head | | Value in Dollars (000) 2/ | | Number of Head | | Value in Dollars (000) | |
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2009 | 2010 | 2009 | 2010 | 2009 | 2010 | 2009 | 2010 | 2009 | 2010 |
| Predators | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bear | 200 | 300 | 23.2 | 51.0 | 200 | 600 | 12.1 | 49.0 | 400 | 900 | 35.3 | 100.0 |
| Bobcat | — | — | — | — | 100 | — | 6.1 | — | 100 | — | 6.1 | — |
| Coyote | 2,500 | 1,800 | 290.5 | 306.0 | 12,100 | 10,300 | 733.3 | 840.5 | 14,600 | 12,100 | 1,023.8 | 1,146.5 |
| Dog | 200 | 300 | 23.2 | 51.0 | 200 | 600 | 12.1 | 49.0 | 400 | 900 | 35.3 | 100.0 |
| Eagle | — | — | — | — | 600 | 800 | 36.3 | 65.3 | 600 | 800 | 36.3 | 65.3 |
| Fox | — | — | — | — | 1,300 | 1,400 | 78.8 | 114.2 | 1,300 | 1,400 | 78.8 | 114.2 |
| Mountain Lion | — | 200 | — | 34.0 | 300 | 300 | 18.2 | 24.5 | 300 | 500 | 18.2 | 58.5 |
| Wolf | 400 | 200 | 46.5 | 34.0 | 300 | 400 | 18.2 | 32.6 | 700 | 600 | 64.7 | 66.6 |
| Other Animals | — | — | — | — | 100 | — | 6.1 | — | 100 | — | 6.1 | — |
| Unknown Predators | 100 | 200 | 11.6 | 34.0 | 200 | 400 | 12.1 | 32.6 | 300 | 600 | 23.7 | 66.6 |
| Total Predators | 3,400 | 3,000 | 396.0 | 510.0 | 15,400 | 14,800 | 933.3 | 1,207.7 | 18,800 | 17,800 | 1,328.3 | 1,717.7 |
| Non-Predators | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Digestive | 300 | 3/ | 34.8 | 3/ | 400 | 3/ | 24.2 | 3/ | 700 | 3/ | 59.0 | 3/ |
| Internal Parasites | 200 | 3/ | 23.2 | 3/ | 200 | 3/ | 12.1 | 3/ | 400 | 3/ | 35.3 | 3/ |
| Respiratory | 400 | 3/ | 46.6 | 3/ | 1,900 | 3/ | 115.1 | 3/ | 2,300 | 3/ | 161.7 | 3/ |
| Metabolic | — | 3/ | — | 3/ | 200 | 3/ | 12.1 | 3/ | 200 | 3/ | 12.1 | 3/ |
| Other Diseases | 900 | 3/ | 104.5 | 3/ | 900 | 3/ | 54.5 | 3/ | 1,800 | 3/ | 159.0 | 3/ |
| Total Diseases | 1,800 | 1,400 | 209.1 | 238.0 | 3,600 | 3,500 | 218.0 | 285.6 | 5,400 | 4,900 | 427.1 | 523.6 |
| Lambing Complications | 700 | 1,200 | 81.3 | 204.0 | 3,600 | 4,300 | 218.2 | 350.9 | 4,300 | 5,500 | 299.5 | 554.9 |
| Old Age | 2,800 | 2,900 | 325.3 | 493.0 | — | — | — | — | 2,800 | 2,900 | 325.3 | 493.0 |
| On Back | 300 | 400 | 34.8 | 68.0 | 100 | — | 6.1 | — | 400 | 400 | 40.9 | 68.0 |
| Poison | 400 | 400 | 46.6 | 68.0 | 200 | 300 | 12.1 | 24.5 | 600 | 700 | 58.7 | 92.5 |
| Theft | — | 200 | — | 34.0 | — | 300 | — | 24.5 | — | 500 | — | 58.5 |
| Weather Conditions | 2,700 | 1,200 | 313.6 | 204.0 | 10,800 | 7,500 | 654.5 | 612.0 | 13,500 | 8,700 | 968.1 | 816.0 |
| Other | 100 | 400 | 11.6 | 68.0 | 900 | 1,200 | 54.5 | 97.9 | 1,000 | 1,600 | 66.1 | 165.9 |
| Total Non-Predators | 8,800 | 8,100 | 1,022.3 | 1,377.0 | 19,200 | 17,100 | 1,163.4 | 1,395.4 | 28,000 | 25,200 | 2,185.7 | 2,772.4 |
| Unknown Causes | 2,800 | 1,900 | 325.3 | 323.0 | 6,400 | 4,100 | 387.8 | 334.6 | 9,200 | 6,000 | 713.1 | 657.6 |
| Total Loss | 15,000 | 13,000 | 1,742.6 | 2,210.0 | 41,000 | 36,000 | 2,484.5 | 2,937.7 | 56,000 | 49,000 | 4,227.1 | 5,147.7 |

1/ Using average reported value for Ewes 1+.

2/ Lamb values equal to market year average price received for lambs multiplied by an average weight of 60 pounds per lamb.

3/ Breakouts not asked in 2010.

— Denotes less than 100 head.

Sheep and Lamb Loss by Predators 2010

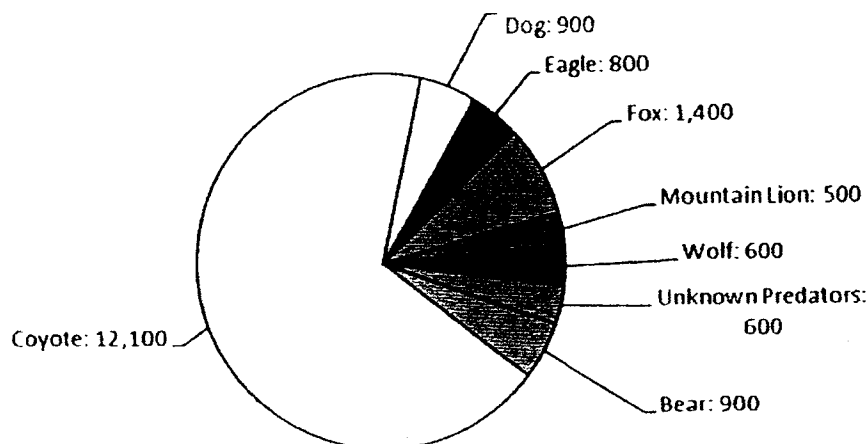


Table 4: Sheep & Lambs: Percent of Death Losses by Cause, Montana, 2001-2010

| Cause of Loss | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Predators | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bear | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Bobcat | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Coyote | 22 | 21 | 20 | 21 | 19 | 20 | 23 | 20 | 26 | 25 |
| Dog | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Eagle | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Fox | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Mountain Lion | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | — | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Wolf | — | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Other Animals | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Unknown Predators | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total Predators 1/ | 30 | 31 | 30 | 31 | 27 | 28 | 34 | 30 | 34 | 36 |
| Non-Predators | | | | | | | | | | |
| Digestive | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 7 | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 1 | 2/ |
| Internal Parasites | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 1 | 2/ |
| Respiratory | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 10 | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 4 | 2/ |
| Metabolic | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 2 | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 1 | 2/ |
| Other Diseases | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 3 | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 2/ | 3 | 2/ |
| Total Diseases | 16 | 12 | 14 | 22 | 17 | 13 | 16 | 11 | 10 | 10 |
| Lambing Complications | 11 | 12 | 15 | 11 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 11 | 8 | 11 |
| Old Age | 8 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| On Back | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Poison | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Theft | 1 | 1 | 3 | — | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | — | 1 |
| Weather Conditions | 13 | 20 | 11 | 12 | 15 | 18 | 14 | 23 | 24 | 18 |
| Other | 7 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Total Non-Predators 1/ | 58 | 60 | 57 | 59 | 62 | 58 | 55 | 58 | 50 | 51 |
| Unknown Causes | 12 | 9 | 13 | 10 | 11 | 14 | 11 | 11 | 16 | 12 |
| Total Loss 1/ | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

1/ Totals may not add due to rounding.

2/ Not available.

— Denotes less than 1 percent.

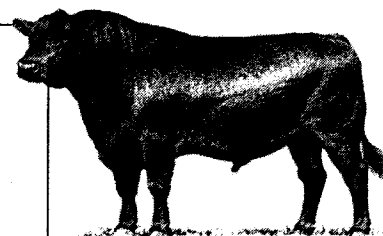
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Director

Carmen Pennington
Agricultural Statistician

ANGUS BEEF BULLETIN®

"The Commercial Cattleman's Angus Connection"

Volume 27, Number 1 • January 2011



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On the Front Lines of Controversy:

Ranching in the Presence of Wolves

For this Idaho ranch and others like it, the gray wolf is a surefire predator preying not only on cattle. but on the bottom line.

Story by
KIM HOLT

It was business as usual when American Angus Association Regional Manager Rod Wesselman pulled into the OX Ranch, located near Council in western Idaho, to conduct an on-site AngusSource® audit in fall 2009. His visit quickly took a different turn after ranch manager Casey Anderson mentioned he and his wife, Cindy, were participating in a collaborative research project on the study of how wolves impact beef cattle grazing behavior — in their backyard, so to speak.

The Andersons' willingness to participate in this study was tempered by their mounting frustration with the "endangered species" — 28 of them — that had taken up residence in the OX's high-mountain pastures, learning how

to stalk, kill and feed on their version of *Certified Angus Beef*®.

Wolves present new learning curve

Thirty-five gray wolves were reintroduced into central Idaho in 1995 and 1996 as part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 1987 endangered species recovery plan for wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains. Since then the wolf population has survived, thrived and expanded its range within the state, much of which is considered prime wolf habitat (see map on page 2). Likewise, as wolves moved into areas with cattle and sheep ranches, the number of livestock killed or injured by wolves has increased.

Casey, who is originally from Pendleton, Ore., has lifelong ranching roots.

"When I came in 2005 to the OX,

they were experiencing some things but didn't know what to contribute it to," he says. "They could see changes with cattle behavior and grazing distribution."

He and his ranch crew had dealt with coyotes and mountain lions, but nothing like this. "You try to attribute it to things you have experience with. But it's a different learning curve with wolves," he assures.

At first, the OX crew couldn't figure out why calves were showing up with wounds that were abscessing on their knees or hocks. But after clipping the hair away, they discovered the fang marks on these calves. While these critters had gotten away, others wouldn't be as successful.

In 2008 the OX experienced its first "known" wolf depredation, and cattle kept coming up missing.

(Continued on page 2)

Ranching in the Presence of Wolves *(from cover)*

"It went from there and just exploded in 2009 because of the number of wolves," Casey says. They would eventually discover the OX had two wolf packs bumping against its property.

Depredations mount in tough terrain

In 2009, Wildlife Services (WS), a division of the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) charged with investigating wildlife-livestock incidences, documented 18 different wolf depredations on the OX. However, Casey and Cindy knew they were losing more calves than this.

As cows moved through the ranch up to higher pastures, they noticed in one herd — the same one being studied by researchers (see "OX assists study of wolf-livestock interactions," page 4) — that there were a lot of cows in various stages of drying up, an indication they'd just previously lost calves. Furthermore, these cows were on mountain pastures where the OX was incurring a large amount of wolf activity.

As Casey and Cindy monitored scat (wolf manure) for the research study, their monitoring told a similar story.

"In that area where those cattle were," Casey explains, "we were finding on a road in a 6-mile loop as many as 20 new piles of wolf manure every other day. In that wolf manure would be solid black hair, calf hooves and calf dewclaws." He and Cindy documented this as "CAB" in their notes.

While they were certain of their losses, they didn't know how many. That's because on the OX, as on many western ranches, cattle graze in expansive, high country in summer months. Furthermore, "If you don't find a kill within a few hours and you have a lot of wolves, there's nothing left," Casey reassures (see "Compensation available, but not always cut-and-dried," page 6).

The OX is a combination of private and public lands, totaling about 135,000 grazing acres. Cattle graze in early spring on the bottoms of Hell's Canyon by the Snake River and, as spring progresses and goes into early summer, they work up out of the breaks of the river onto the Plateau, which is roughly around 4,500 feet elevation. The OX calves here in late spring; their cows are bred for a 60-day season and heifers for a 45-day season.

From there, the cattle are moved toward the end of July to the higher mountains at 6,000-7,000 feet in altitude. By September they are at about 8,000 feet. They start gathering cattle the end of September, where they come back down onto deeded property at about 4,500 feet. From here, they're moved to lower winter range.

The OX's base herd includes about 1,000 mother cows, of which all but one-third are bred to Angus bulls. It also retains the majority of its calves and runs them over as yearlings the following summer.

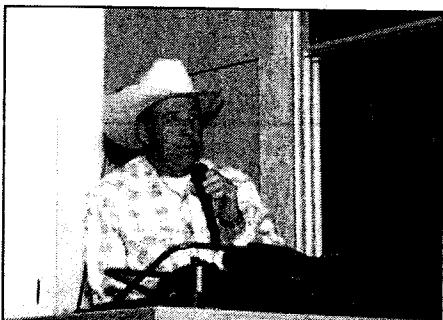
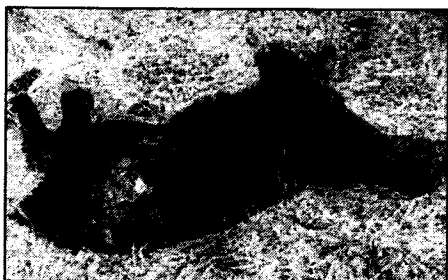


PHOTO BY LEE FARREN

Casey Anderson, manager of Idaho's OX Ranch, puts a face on the highly emotional and controversial gray wolf issue that many Idaho ranchers continue to face. While he admits public speaking is out of his comfort zone, out of frustration he has willingly shared the OX's story of cattle production in the presence of wolves at several meetings. "When you see wolves on TV, it's a warm fuzzy thing with the mother licking its pups," he says. "They don't show the real reality of what's going on. Most people who support the wolves and their reintroduction are people who the wolves will never affect directly."



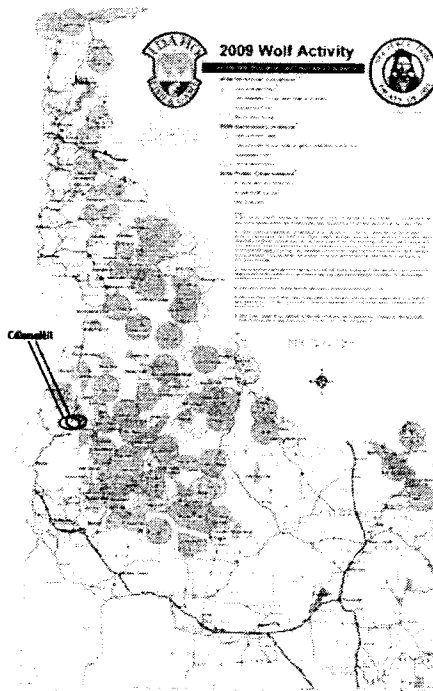
PHOTOS COURTESY OF OX RANCH

This was the OX's first "confirmed" depredation. The OX crew was gathering heifers and a bunch of calves ran back, Cindy Anderson explains. They decided to let the group settle down as they went to lunch. When they came back, a female wolf had killed this calf. "The calf dug the wolf for at least 10 yards before its insides started to fall out," she reports. Wolves are known for feeding on their prey while it's still alive, often consuming the best flesh first.

Grazing lands on the OX consist of rugged mountains, steep canyons and plateaus divided by stream drainages. Grass dominates the lower elevations, while conifers dominate the higher elevations.

In these types of environments, typical of western grazing, it's more than tough to effectively implement nonlethal wolf-control measures, such as hazing by range riders or shooting with rubber bullets. In addition to the sheer expanse, the topography and vegetation of their grazing lands make it more difficult for livestock losses to be found — and easy for the elusive gray wolf to hide.

(Continued on page 4)



In 1996, 35 wolves were reintroduced into central Idaho. Sources close to this issue report that a conservative population estimate today is 850-1,000. Casey Anderson believes with the reality and remoteness of country like that of the OX, there easily could be 1,500 wolves. "Wolves are very elusive," he says. "You don't get to see them very often," which is why they're difficult to kill even with issued shoot-on-sight permits. "If you don't have a way of controlling the numbers, this is what happens."

Casey often visits with families who have children and dogs in tow, camping on nearby Forest Service land. He warns them of the area's wolf activity, but they look at him as if he's crazy, he says. They believe wolves are out in the wilderness, not just two hours from the city.

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Ranching in the Presence of Wolves *(from page 2)*

A cooperative study carried out by the University of Idaho, WS and the Nez Perce Tribe on the impacts of wolf predation to cattle on summer grazing allotments in Idaho's Lemhi County suggested that for every calf killed by wolves and found by the cattle producer, as many as eight additional wolf kills may have occurred without ever being detected.

Indirect expenses add up

As a result of the depredation the OX continued to incur, in 2009 WS removed 15 wolves from its rangelands and logged in 240 hours on the OX. In the aftermath of wolves, however, were production losses and the burden of added time and labor to deal with this issue neither they nor the

state of Idaho asked for.

Casey and Cindy both note the amount of time depredations tie up.

"It's amazing how much time it takes to notify the right officials, go out with them and look at the kill site," Casey states.

"When we get a wolf kill, it takes a whole day by the time you get them confirmed," Cindy adds. "It's just a nightmare, and it's very stressful."

The added stress of wolf presence in summer pastures affected the cattle as well.

Casey explains, "Really, our greatest loss is cow condition. In 2009, as we were shipping out to winter country, an observation was that the cows overall were a full body score less than normal. And that dictates back to about 100 pounds

(lb.) on a mature cow. If you were trying to put that 100 pounds back on those cattle, it would take a lot of extra time and expense.

"On top of that, our [pregnancy] rate was as low as 84% on some groups of cows. With our management practices and herd-health program, that should be 95%."

In 2009 they were short in the neighborhood of 65-75 calves; five cows and two yearlings weren't accounted for either. Before wolves were present, their normal death loss was about nine calves per grazing season.

These figures also don't include the 5-year-old and older open cows they culled — 35-40 head more than normal — because their calves were killed by wolves.

"That's the heart and soul of your herd," Casey asserts. "Those are your

most productive cows." But you can't keep them, he says, because they'll be old the next time they calve.

On top of this, they have to retain more replacement heifers to maintain their numbers, another unintended consequence with a hefty price tag.

Wounded calves add additional medicine expense, labor and losses. Often these animals can't be managed or marketed with the group.

"You'll end up with calves with bites on the sides of their ribs or in their front shoulder or in their round," Casey describes. As a rancher, it's his nature to heal them up, he says, when in reality, it'd probably be more cost-effective to put them down.

Even though the OX crew utilizes good stockmanship skills, wolf predation has changed herd behavior. Cattle are much more aggressive, are anxious and difficult to herd and handle, especially in the corral. Dogs are very valuable for moving cattle in the rough country, and their cows were dog-broke.

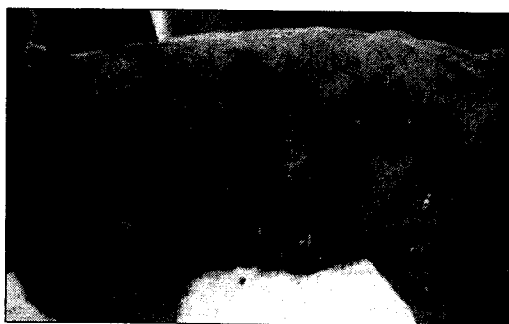
But now "the Angus cows are pretty darn aggressive when it comes to these wolves and the dogs," says Casey, adding he believes they can't tell dogs and wolves apart. "You might have a herd of nice gentle cows until they're exposed to the wolves, and then things really change."

Last year, without wolf pressure, the OX crew observed the cows relaxed and acted more "cow-like" when they were on lower winter country. But it still took them one to two months to adjust.

Committed to stewardship

This past year (2010) they have seen a noticeable improvement in the attitudes

(Continued on page 6)



Indicators that wolves are present include wounds like this on sides of calves and even bites on hindquarters that look like scratches. Though there may be no holes in the hide, there is tremendous damage to the tissue underneath, Cindy Anderson explains. "Most of these wounds will abscess and become very infected." Casey Anderson says wolves have very large teeth that aren't sharp, but powerful. This helps explain why they don't always leave puncture marks on the hide. To confirm a wolf bite, oftentimes a pair of clippers is needed.



"This calf was just limping when we found it," Cindy Anderson explains of a calf bit on its hip by a wolf. "Another calf was killed at the same time this one was wounded. This calf showed no signs of trauma. Then its hip abscessed. Eventually the calf had to be put down because it never could walk on its leg." As shown here, wolf bites create a tremendous amount of infection.

OX assists study of wolf-livestock interactions

As wolf populations have grown in the northern Rocky Mountains, including in Idaho, incidents of wolf predation on cattle and sheep have increased.

Rough tallies are annually made on livestock death and injury losses caused by wolf predation, but little is known about the indirect effects of wolf-livestock interactions on cattle production.

Casey and Cindy Anderson helped collect data and gather facts about the wolf presence on the OX for a research project* carried out in western Idaho-northeastern Oregon on how cattle work the country with and without the presence of wolves.

Cattle movements and pasture usage on the OX are all recorded on computer. Therefore Casey believed he had some history that would be of assistance in this study.

"The main push for the study is to come up with alternative management plans to try to deal with the problems associated with livestock production relating to the presence of wolves," he explains. He says he believes it will be a useful tool for cattlemen and conservationists alike.

On the OX, 10 mature cows from a cow-calf herd of 450 head were fitted with GPS collars that recorded their movement data every 5 minutes. A 90-pound (lb.) male wolf from a nearby pack of 13 was also fitted with a GPS collar that recorded his movements every 15 minutes. Data was collected to determine the

timing, frequency, duration and landscape position of wolf-cow interactions at 500, 250 and 100 meters during the 2009 grazing season.

Between May 23 and Nov. 3, a 137-day duration, that one collared wolf was recorded within 500 meters of GPS-collared cattle 783 times. Interestingly, the GPS tracking data indicated the collared cows were typically widely separated from each other and only on rare occasions would two or more collared cows come together for a time.

"From this you can understand how many times all the cows in that herd are coming into contact with wolves, and why we are really noticing cattle behavior patterns and cattle distribution problems," Casey says.

He adds that researchers thought those 10 collared cows would only come into contact with the collared wolf about two or three times in that period.

"Some of this data is totally amazing," he points out. "The perimeter of this wolf's range is 55 miles. Between July 1 and 14, the least amount he traveled in a day was 6 miles; the most he traveled was 19 miles a day. In the total time he was collared, the most he traveled in one day was 29 miles." As this data shows, wolves can cover a lot of country in a short period of time.

"We have had some people on the other side of this issue really take offense to some of the scientific information we've been finding," he remarks.

This study also indicated that human presence and activity were not a strong deterrent to the collared wolf — or other wolves, in fact. During the study, the OX had 14 confirmed and probable cattle depredations in an adjacent calving pasture frequented by humans and close to ranch buildings and homes. The ranch only weaned 80% of calves from this herd, vs. 95% prior to wolf presence.

Casey further adds, "One day the collared wolf spent all day within 370 yards of where our lodge and one of our houses are on the ranch. It came right down into the orchard, within 50 yards of the lodge that day.

"We've had these wolves travel within 25 yards of our house. We have data that shows how close this collared wolf came to the different residences in this area. People would be pretty amazed if they knew how close these wolves were to their houses where they live.

"This is a misconception with most people — they think 'well the wolves, they're in the wilderness. They're not hurting anybody.' No, they're right in your backyard," he reassures.

*This research study was financially supported by the Oregon Beef Council, USDA/Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, USDA/Agricultural Research Service, Cooperating Ranches and Ranch Families, Oregon Agricultural Experiment, University of Idaho and Oregon State University.

Ranching in the Presence of Wolves (from page 4)

of their cattle, given a lesser number of wolves on their grazing lands, Casey reports. "There has been a change since the number of wolves has been reduced, but we still have pressure and problems."

They've sent 12 depredation reports to WS, and they've noted that the number of cows without calves coming through the ranch is probably 25% of their 2009 numbers. But still, any losses are "disheartening" to this ranch manager who has worked his entire life on stewardship.

"I don't own this ranch, but I take it very personal," Casey says.

From genetics to herd health to marketing, the OX is committed to adding value to its cattle through the chain.

"Our main goal is to take calves all the way to the end product," Casey says. Their yearlings are fed at Beef Northwest and harvested at Tyson-Pasco.

The OX prides itself on raising good livestock, and Casey isn't afraid to spend top dollar on Angus bulls. "Because of our records, we've been able to age- and source-verify these calves for a number of years," the last two through AngusSource. "We work real closely with our veterinarians on our vaccination and health protocols," he says.

Casey is also passionate about range management, and he was recognized for this by both the Society for Range Management (SRM) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) during his 16-year tenure on a northern Nevada cow-calf operation.

"It's just something I've spent my life doing," he explains. "Here at the OX, the owners are very conservation-minded. It's their priority to be good stewards."

The OX has over a 20-year association with the University of Idaho's range management studies, and was recently recognized as an honorary alumnus by the University for its commitment to rangeland and student engagement.

Casey describes the wolf issue as "very frustrating" because it distracts attention away from important stewardship practices such as spring development, cattle distribution and proper cattle movement.

"All these things you take great pride in," he remarks. "It's been the drive for many ranchers for a lot of years." He points out, however, that it's not just ranchers who are dealing with the effects of wolves.

"Our state's wildlife is also suffering tremendously. Hunters have been the main conservation people of the wildlife forever. It's affecting them, and so many decisions aren't being based on scientific evidence.

"This whole issue is emotionally charged, political, and the trouble is the people who are making the decisions aren't the ones who have to live with it," Casey says.

"It's a really tough deal," he stresses, "and the implications go really deep for a ranching operation."

Struggling for optimism

Casey acknowledges that some ranchers within the state have already thrown in the towel, having sold their cows, and even the ranch. But he tries to stay optimistic about the future.

Having to quit ranching would be "a pretty hard thing to swallow," he says. "But the reality is there. If we're not allowed to control the wolf numbers and hold some of the losses down, we're going to end up not being a viable business.

"It's hard to be optimistic when you see the effects it's having on the cow herd and what it takes to deal with the problems that are associated with the wolves. And it's really disheartening when you put in so much effort, time and money to have a good operation.

"If they would have controlled early, we wouldn't be seeing the depredation,"

he says. "We have so far exceeded what the numbers in the state were supposed to be that that is why we are experiencing the problems we're having. If we only had 150 wolves in the state of Idaho, we probably wouldn't be having this discussion."

He adds, "It doesn't matter how many wolves there are, you'll have problems. The thing we need people to realize is that we have a couple of years invested in our end product."

Casey says people would have a whole different appreciation for what's going on if they'd come out and see for themselves. But he is optimistic that the ongoing research study the OX is participating in will help shed some light on the wolf-cattle issue.

"I would like to think somewhere down the line things are going to get better," he concludes. This is what some of us live for — to have good dogs, good cattle and ride good horses."

Compensation available, but not always cut-and-dried

Compensation is available in the state of Idaho for ranches like the OX that face depredations and missing livestock, but it's not as cut-and-dried as one would think.

Wolf depredations are classified as confirmed, probable, possible and other. Up through this past September, Defenders of Wildlife (DOW) compensated producers 50% for a "probable" kill and 100% for a "confirmed" wolf kill. The challenge therein lies in the word "confirmed."

DOW required proof that the animal was killed and not just fed on by wolves. This entails skinning the animal to look for evidence of the kill, including the trauma area(s) and/or fang marks. The irony is if the wolf has eaten the evidence, or most of the carcass, a "confirmed" kill likely can't be proven, even if there are wolf tracks and scat all around.

This is extremely frustrating for producers like Casey Anderson. "It's really tough when you see calf body parts in the wolf manure," he says. "You know exactly what it is."

DOW had pledged to compensate ranchers until the gray

wolf was off the Endangered Species List, but backed out of its wolf depredation compensation program this past fall, after the gray wolf was re-listed as endangered in August. Now, without the DOW fund, the wolf depredation compensation responsibility falls to the state of Idaho.

Earlier this year the state of Idaho became a successful recipient of a new federal grant titled the Wolf Livestock Demonstration project, which will help the state pick up some of the slack now that DOW is no longer covering wolf-related livestock losses in Idaho. Unfortunately, the responsibility of paying for wolf-related livestock losses now defaults to the taxpayers as opposed to those groups who are fighting to keep this recovered and robust population of wolves on the Endangered Species List.

Under the state program, compensation for verified losses (confirmed and probables) are given priority and paid at market value, while compensation for unverified or missing livestock will be allocated on a pro rata basis.

A rough and rocky road

The reintroduction of the gray wolf into the Northern Rocky Mountains has proven to be a rough and rocky road littered with litigation.

Idaho cattlemen were united in opposing the reintroduction of the gray wolf into their state. "But when wolves were brought to Idaho and it was clear from the federal government that wolves were here to stay, we immediately began to work to find ways to ease the burdens that wolves brought to ranchers," says Karen Williams, Idaho Cattle Association (ICA) policy director.

ICA worked relentlessly on the wolf issue, even holding a seat on the Idaho Fish & Game committee charged with drafting the state wolf plan. This plan, approved by the state legislature and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), was implemented once wolves were delisted in 2009.

This is just one reason why it was so discouraging for all — including the state, its sportsmen and livestock producers — when the gray wolf was re-listed as an endangered species for the second time, in three years, both times under court order following lawsuits

from wildlife advocates. The state of Idaho has filed a notice of appeal with the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, seeking to overturn U.S. District Court Judge Donald Malloy's Aug. 5 decision to re-list wolves in its state. Re-listing ends state management for both Idaho and Montana and an upcoming wolf hunt scheduled by both to curb wolf numbers.

Idaho's first regulated wolf hunt, opened in 2009, harvested 188 of a 220 quota in a seven-month period. This hunt effectively stopped growth of the wolf population within the state, reports Dustin Miller, environmental liaison, Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation in Boise. Confirmed year-to-date depredations through Sept. 30 were also lower in 2010 vs. the same period in 2009.

The federal government, and even Malloy, acknowledges the gray wolf is a recovered species in Idaho and Montana. But Malloy interpreted the ESA to read that a species must be delisted across a region; not just in different states. Wolves were still on the endangered species list in Wyoming.

At their fall convention, ICA members were brought up to speed on the issue as it now stands. Tom Perry, legal counselor to the Governor's Office of Species Conservation, said, "The unfortunate part about the Ninth Circuit and any other route of litigation is it takes time. And time is what we don't have right now. Even if we were to get some relief, you're looking at least at a year and a half before you'll get any positive decision back from that Circuit."

Miller said that Congress is another avenue being pursued, and federal legislation is in the works by lawmakers in Idaho, Montana and Utah. "With the political shift of the election the reality is that we could gain a little more traction this next Congress on trying to get a legislative fix," meaning an amendment to the Endangered Species Act that excludes the gray wolf.

According to 2009 USFWS data, wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountain region number 1,706 in 242 packs with 115 breeding pairs. Miller reports about 850-1,000 are in Idaho, but believes this estimate is conservative.